

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 471

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR IS SY EG

SUBJECT: ERES AND GALILI ON SYRIA AND EGYPT

1. PERES AND MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO YISRAEL GALILI
IN SEPARATE FORUMS ON MARCH 3 ADDRESSED INTERRELATED
QUESTIONS OF THREAT OF SYRIAN-INITIATED WAR AND EGYPTIAN
OBSERVANCE OF SINAI II.

2. ANSWERING JOURNALISTS QUESTIONS DURING A TOUR OF SETTLEMENTS
ON THE NORTHERN BORDER, DEFENSE MINISTER PERES SAID
THAT THE MAIN THREAT TO PEACE TODAY COMES FROM
THE SYRIANS, WHO ARE TRYING TO INCREASE THEIR MILITARY
INFLUENCE IN LEBANON AND TURN IT INTO A CONFRONTATION
STATE. THERE HAD BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN
THE DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. THERE
WERE NO PLA UNITS STATIONED ON THE BORDER AND
LEBANESE ARMY DETACHMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN CARRYING OUT
LIMITED PATROLS HAVE NOT RETURNED TO THEIR
QUARTERS VACATED IN JANUARY.

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3. SPEAKING IN KNESSET PLENUM PERES REPLIED TO

LIKUD MOTION CHARGING THAT SADAT HAS VIOLATED SINAI II ACCORD PROHIBITING USE OF FORCE OR THREAT OF FORCE (LIKUD REFERENCE IS TO SADAT'S REPORTED STATEMENT THAT IF GENEVA FAILS THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE OPTION--WAR). PERES ON BALANCE BELIEVED EGYPT WAS COMMITTED TO OBSERVING SINAI II, BUT THAT ISRAEL HAD TO REMAIN ALERT TO POSSIBILITY THAT IT COULD BE DRAWN INTO NEW WAR THROUGH PAN-ARAB PRESSURES. EGYPT, HE SAID, APPEARED TO HAVE SIGNED SINAI II WITH A VIEW TO OBSERVING IT AND HAD CONSISTENTLY REJECTED PRESSURES TO OVERTURN THE AGREEMENT.

4. GALILI, WHO ADDRESSED HAIFA STUDENTS, REFERRED TO SADAT'S REPORTED REMARKS THAT EGYPT WOULD NOT JOIN SYRIA IN A WAR INITIATED BY SYRIA AND DESCRIBED THE STATEMENT AS "ONE OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT." AS FOR ISRAEL, THE MINISTER ADDED, "IT WILL NOT ATTACK ANY ARAB STATE, INCLUDING SYRIA. WE HAVE NO REASON TO ATTACK UNLESS IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT IF WE HOLD BACK WE WILL BE FATALLY ATTACKED BY SYRIA. IN THAT CASE WE WOULD BE PRACTICISING SELF-DEFENSE AND NOT ATTACKING."

5. COMMENT: THESE REMARKS HIGHLIGHT FACT THAT ISRAELIS ARE INCREASINGLY PREOCCUPIED BY SUSPICION AS TO SYRIAN INTENTIONS AND CONCERN OVER EGYPTIAN ROLE SHOULD HOSTILITIES RESUME. IN PARTICULAR, THEY WILL BE PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION TO EGYPTIAN STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS FOR ANY SIGNS OF WHAT EGYPT MIGHT DO IF TENSIONS INCREASE. RABIN AND THE CABINET HAVE STATED A GREAT DEAL ON THEIR ASSESSMENT THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR BENEFITS OF SINAI II IS THAT EGYPT--AT LEAST AT THE OUTSET--WOULD STAND ASIDE IN CASE OF A SYRIAN-INITIATED WAR.
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